

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 /055 W
----- 017983

R 061400Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6687

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 5478

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN, SN, ID, MY, TH

SUBJECT: RECENT MEETINGS BETWEEN CERTAIN ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

1. DEPUTY SECRETARY TAN BOON SENG INFORMED DCM
DECEMBER 6 THAT GOS HAS WELCOMED RECENT SPATE OF
BILATERAL MEETINGS OF VARIOUS ASEAN HEADS OF
GOVERNMENTS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO GENERATE
GREATER MOVEMENT IN REALIZING CLOSER ASEAN ECONOMIC
COOPERATION. HE NOTED THAT THE GOS HAD BEEN SERVING
AS CHAIRMAN OF THE ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE DURING
THE PAST YEAR, AND FELT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT
ASEAN RECORD PROGRESS IN THIS AREA BEFORE THE NEXT
MEETING OF THE ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH
HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE WOULD BE AN ASEAN SUMMIT
MEETING IN 1977, TAN SAID HE DID NOT RULE OUT THE
POSSIBILITY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE PRESS STATEMENTS ISSUED
AFTER THE SUHARTO AND THANIN VISITS TO SINGAPORE HAD
EMPHASIZED THE THEME OF CLOSER ECONOMIC COOPERATION
BETWEEN THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS.

2. SUHARTO VISIT TO SINGAPORE: TAN SAID THE GGOI HAD
TAKEN THE INITIATIVE BY SUGGESTING THAT LEE KUAN YEW
STOP OFF IN INDONESIA ON HIS WAY TO OR FROM VISITING
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AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER FRASER. GOS RESPONDED BY

NOTING THAT THE LAST BILATERAL MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS HAD OCCURRED IN BALI AND SUGGESTED THAT SUHARTO PAY AN INFORMAL VISIT TO SINGAPORE. SUHARTO AGREED TO DO SO IN CONNECTION WITH HIS VISIT TO BATAM ISLAND. CLEARING UP ONE MINOR MYSTERY, TAN SAID THE INFORMAL NATURE OF THE VISIT AS WELL AS LACK OF TIME HAD PREVENTED THE ISSUANCE OF A JOINT PRESS STATEMENT. HOWEVER, THE INDONESIANS HAD TAKEN THE PROPOSED PRESS STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED BY THE GOS (SEE SINGAPORE 5405) WITH THEM TO BATAM ISLAND AND SUBSEQUENTLY CLEARED IT WITHOUT AMENDMENT. TAN DECLINED TO GO INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MEETINGS, POINTING OUT THAT THE TWO LEADERS HAD BEEN CLOSETED TOGETHER WITHOUT AIDES DURING MOST OF THE VISIT.

3. THANIN VISIT TO SINGAPORE: TAN OBSERVED THAT P.M. THANIN HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE IN VISITING SINGAPORE. HE COMMENTED THAT THANIN WAS VERY INEXPERIENCED AND HAD INDICATED HE WANTED TO RECEIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, SEA SCENE, AND ASEAN. AGAIN THE TWO LEADERS MET TOGETHER WITHOUT AIDES FOR A LONG TIME, AND THEREFORE THERE WAS LITTLE HE COULD SAY THAT WAS NOT COVERED IN THE PRESS STATEMENT. HOWEVER, HE VOLUNTEERED THAT PRIME MINISTER THANIN HAD INDICATED HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY. (SEE SINGAPORE 5460).

4. LEE KUAN YEW'S CURRENT VISIT TO KUALA LUMPUR: TAN SAID THAT PM LEE HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO VISIT KUALA LUMPUR AT THIS TIME, AND POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD BE HIS FIRST VISIT THERE SINCE HUSSEIN ONN HAD BECOME PRIME MINISTER. TAN COMMENTED THAT MANY MONTHS HAD ELAPSED SINCE HUSSEIN'S VISIT TO SINGAPORE LAST FEBRUARY, AND PM LEE PROBABLY FELT IT WOULD BE TIMELY FOR HIM TO VISIT KUALA LUMPUR TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH THE MALAYSIAN PM. TAN ASSUMED LEE WOULD USE THE OCCASION TO OBTAIN HUSSEIN'S ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR CLOSER MALAYSIAN AND THAI COOPERATION IN BORDER SECURITY, AND TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON THE THANIN AND SUHARTO VISITS. LEE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO ENGINEER GREATER ASEAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC COOPERATION, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SINGAP05478
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760450-1221
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761269/aaaachsi.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <22 SEP 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECENT MEETINGS BETWEEN CERTAIN ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PFOR, SN, ID, MY, TH, ASEAN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006